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Vodafone Qatar acquires ISO re-certification for quality management

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GULF TIMES
BUSINESS

STRONGER DEMAND: Page 2

QIB-UK gives its expert view of real estate market in UK with London focus

HEC Paris in Qatar hosts masterclass on scaling startups

By Peter Alagos
Business Reporter

HEC Paris in Qatar recently held a masterclass and panel discussion titled 'How to Scale a Startup? Key Lessons from Qatar Grown Companies' featuring three founders of leading startups in the country.

The discussion was highlighted by insights shared by Ghanim al-Sulaiti, founder and CEO of PaperCut Factory; Hesham el-Feshawy, co-founder and CEO of At Home Doc; and Saif Qazi, co-founder and CEO of Urban Point.

Allan Villegas-Mateos, Senior Research Fellow of entrepreneurial ecosystem studies at HEC Paris in Qatar, began the event by sharing his insights into Qatar's entrepreneurial ecosystem and discussing HEC Paris' role in contributing to the ecosystem through initiatives, such as the business research lab and collaboration with Qatar Business and Incubation Centre (QBIC).

Villegas-Mateos also underlined the importance of writing business cases with real Qatar local expertise, including the need for entrepreneurs and companies to explore opportunities within the ecosystem and collaborate to facilitate growth.

Wolfgang Amann, Affiliate Professor of Strategy and Leadership at HEC Paris in Qatar, stressed that scaling involves more than just growth, adding that many scale-up companies are not afraid to revisit and reinvent their strategies.

"Sixty percent of scale-up companies constantly define, so they are not shying away from going back to the drawing board and coming up with new things. Once up and running, their mind is usually already on the future and what could be next. Eighty-five percent of scale-ups try to build scale into the very logic of the product and service they have in mind," Amann explained.

During the panel discussion, Qazi pointed out that challenges arise when targeting a consumer-facing product in such a small market, such as Qatar, citing a population of "less than two and a half million people."

"Scaling in Qatar first before expanding into regional markets can be tough, especially when customer reach is limited. Urban Point had to pivot and reevaluate its approach to customer acquisition and scaling," Qazi explained.

El-Feshawy described scaling as an ongoing journey, adding that it is a result of continuous learning and discovery. He noted that scaling requires a unique strategy, streamlined processes, resources, passion, and purpose.

For his part, al-Sulaiti highlighted how PaperCut Factory adapted to several major market shifts, including the June 2017 economic blockade on Qatar, the Covid-19 pandemic, and preparations for the 2022 FIFA World Cup.

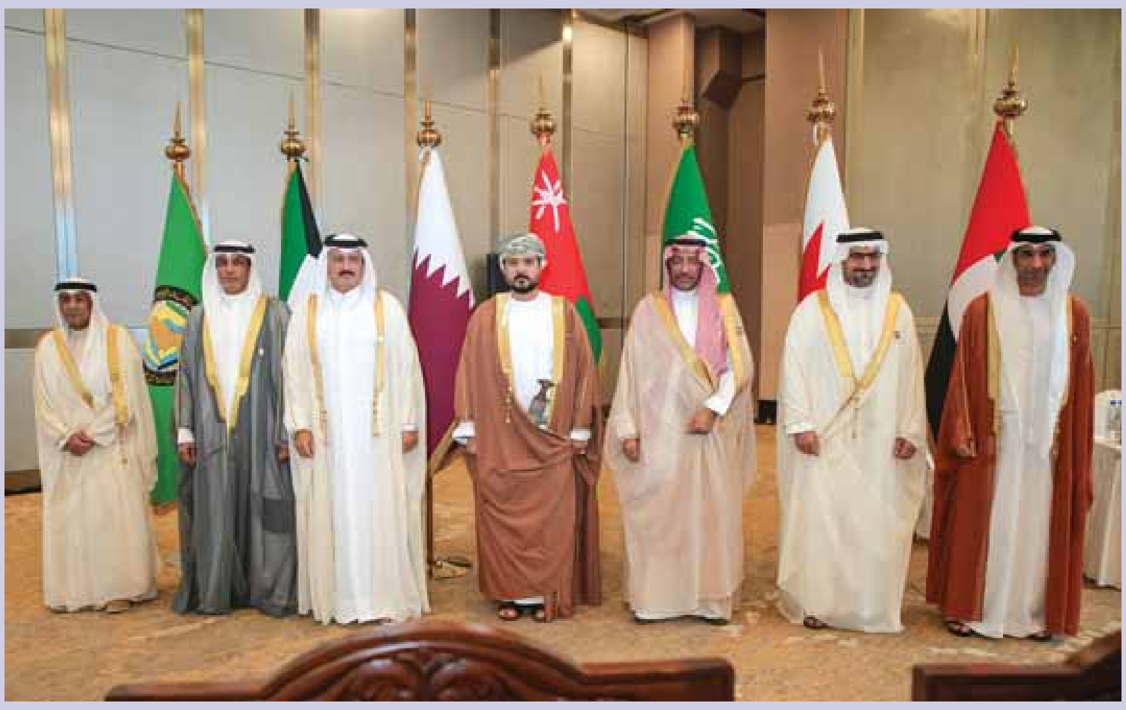
"Despite initial concerns, the Covid-19 pandemic presented an opportunity for PaperCut Factory as there was a demand for packaging materials. We worked tirelessly to meet this demand, demonstrating adaptability...managing this volatility and pivoting the business model is crucial," al-Sulaiti added.

From left: Saif Qazi, co-founder and CEO of Urban Point; Hesham el-Feshawy, co-founder and CEO of At Home Doc; Ghanim al-Sulaiti, founder and CEO of PaperCut Factory; Amin Matni, programme manager at QBIC; Allan Villegas-Mateos, Senior Research Fellow of entrepreneurial ecosystem studies at HEC Paris in Qatar; and Wolfgang Amann, Affiliate Professor of Strategy and Leadership at HEC Paris in Qatar, during the masterclass and panel discussion held in Doha recently. **PICTURE:** Thajudheen

Amin Matni, programme manager at QBIC, acknowledged the role of small and medium-sized (SMEs) in contrast to tech startups. He said, "While tech startups aim for hyper-growth, SMEs play a crucial role in economies as the backbone of supply chains."

BUSINESS

Qatar participates in meetings of GCC Commercial and Industrial Co-operation committees



Qatar recently participated in the 65th meeting of the GCC Commercial Co-operation Committee and the 51st meeting of the GCC Industrial Co-operation Committee, in addition to the 6th meeting of the GCC Ministerial Committee for Standardisation. The meetings were attended by the Ministers of Commerce and Industry in GCC countries in Salalah, the Sultanate of Oman. HE the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry Sultan bin Rashid al-Khater headed the Qatari delegation. The meetings discussed various topics and issues listed on the agenda, and the pertaining decisions were taken. In addition, al-Khater participated in the consultative meeting between the Ministers of Commerce and Industry, and the heads of Federations and Chambers of Commerce of the GCC countries. The consultative meeting addressed various issues and recommendations raised by the heads of Federations and Chambers of Commerce of the GCC countries and took the appropriate pertaining decisions. The Ministers of Commerce and Industry also participated in the opening of the 1st Industrial Gulf Exhibition, which honoured GCC inventors as well as several leading GCC factories.

Qatar Chamber calls for adoption of 'Made in the Gulf' slogan

Qatar Chamber recently participated in the consultative meeting between the GCC Ministers of Commerce and Industry and heads of federations and chambers of the GCC states held in Salala, Oman.

The chamber's delegation, which was led by second vice-chairman Rashid bin Hamad al-Athba, included board member Ibtihaj al-Ahmadany.

Speaking at the meeting, al-Athba expressed Qatar Chamber's appreciation for the efforts exerted by the GCC general secretariat and its affiliated committees in addressing the topics raised during previous consultative meetings.

He emphasised that Qatar Chamber underscores the significance of the private sector's involvement in expressing its opinions regarding the findings of advisory studies and legislation relevant to the private sector.

Al-Athba also stressed the importance of the private sector's participation in the technical team of the Food Security Committee and other relevant committees. He emphasised the need to reprioritise the topics raised at previous consultative meetings, which remain unresolved between the task forces and the various committees.

The Qatar Chamber official also called for the adoption of 'Made in the Gulf' slogan to encourage joint investments and the consolidation of economic policies.

He also urged the promotion of joint ventures through public and private sector partnerships in various projects, including water and electricity, connectivity, road transport, rail projects, technology-based industrial initiatives, and innovation.

To establish 'Made in the Gulf' as a slogan, al-Athba said it is crucial to support sectors that add significant value, leverage the growth potential of logistics services, and increase openness to international exporting and importing countries.

Qatar Chamber second vice-chairman Rashid bin Hamad al-Athba and board member Ibtihaj al-Ahmadany during the meeting.

QIB-UK gives expert view of realty market in UK with London focus

QIB-UK, based in the heart of London's Mayfair district, has given an expert view of the real estate market in the UK and London in particular, which remains one of the top international destinations for Qatari nationals.

In the face of increasing concerns over rising interest rates and increased price sensitivity, prime London residential values have remained remarkably resilient this year, particularly in the city's exclusive central districts, according to international real estate firm Savills.

The fundamentals of what attracts residents to London remain clear – business hub, connectivity, time zone, tourism and education – and buyer demand has continued to be stronger than many had expected.

In the first six months of 2023, new buyer registrations across Savills central London offices were 44% higher than their pre-pandemic average. For tenants, that figure is 31% higher when compared to H1 2019, clearly underscoring the appeal of living in the UK capital, with significant demand from corporates relocating from overseas.

"International travel has picked up since the start of this year, led by passengers from Asia, the Middle East and the US. This has translated into increased demand, though buyers at the top end of the London market remain discerning against the backdrop of macroeconomic uncertainty," notes Frances McDonald.

Prices across London's prime markets slipped by 1.0% on the year to the end of June, according to the Q2 Savills prime London index, outperforming the wider UK market. This leaves values 3.9% above their pre-pandemic level, yet still 6.1% below their previous 2014 peak.

This has translated into a divergence by price point with more expensive homes, those worth more than £5mn, seeing prices remain broadly flat (-0.2%) in the past year. Property in central London worth less than £2mn, a market in which buyers are more likely to be reliant on debt, fell by a more substantial 1.9%.

At the same time, rents across prime central London have continued to increase, albeit at a slower rate than in 2022. Still, they are now 20.9% higher than they were two years ago when the capital opened up after the pandemic, and an influx of demand soon followed.

Transactions for London homes worth more than £5mn also continue to be resilient. A total of 240 such sales were recorded in the first half of the year. While this marks a -21% fall compared to the first six months of 2022, it is on par with the same period in 2021 and 45% above the H1 average for the three years pre-pandemic.

Schemes, such as The OWO, Chelsea Barracks, and The Whiteley have met a growing requirement for turnkey properties from a discerning group of UHNWIs who are drawn to properties that are demonstrably best in class. However, buyers are increasingly recognising that supply of such world-class properties is extremely limited, particularly when compared with locations such as New York or Dubai.

And supply of quality stock is likely to become increasingly constrained, Savills noted, as changes to planning regulations limit any future new homes built in Westminster to 200sq m, with similar restrictions anticipated in Kensington and Chelsea. This means there is now a finite supply of world-class homes at this size in the £5mn-plus bracket.

At current rates of sale, and with just 15 schemes currently under construction delivering homes of this size, Savills estimates that stock will be exhausted within five years.

"A lack of opportunity for developers and local government restrictions on the size of residences is likely to squeeze supply of these grand apartments that have been much sought after by the world's financially elite, both from home and abroad," said Ed Lewis, Savills head of London residential development. "Prime central London must obviously deliver a wide and varied mix of accommodation to meet all the requirements, including value, for those that call London home, but it's become clear that those buyers looking for the best, in one of the world's few truly International cities, may be frustrated by the lack of choice in future years."

QIB-UK has assembled a team of real estate specialists who will help to ensure clients are well placed to get the best real estate opportunities in the market. The bank's network gives interested clients early access to exclusive residential real estate opportunities. They will enjoy privileged introductions to the best opportunities in the London real estate market both for buyers and investors alike.

QIB-UK's location in the heart of London's affluent Mayfair district, at 43 Grosvenor Street, reflects the bank's commitment to its UK business, dedicated to serving its high-net-worth clients from a centrally-located headquarters. Grosvenor Street is internationally recognised as one of London's most prestigious office locations, covering a broad range of leading international enterprises.

QIB-UK, based in the heart of London's Mayfair district, has given an expert view of the real estate market in the UK and London in particular, which remains one of the top international destinations for Qatari nationals

Saudi Arabia to raise $11bn in biggest EMEA loan this year

Bloomberg
Riyadh

Saudi Arabia plans to raise $11bn from a syndicated loan — in what would be the biggest financing deal in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA) this year — as the kingdom seeks to finance its ambitious investment plans.

The kingdom's Ministry of Finance has appointed Industrial & Commercial Bank of China Ltd as co-ordinator and bookrunner for the long-term senior, unsecured loan, according to people familiar with the matter. The 10-year debt is offering an interest rate of 100 basis points over the Secured Overnight Financing Rate — the usual reference rate when borrowing in dollars, the people said, asking not to be identified because the matter is private.

ICBC, as the Chinese lender is known, has invited other banks to participate in the loan and has asked interested parties to respond before mid-October, the people said. It's not immediately clear what the loan will be used for, although the kingdom has a slew of projects in the pipeline as part of a diversification drive championed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

While part of that will be funded by oil revenue, the government also needs to attract foreign investment and borrow. Many key bodies investing in Vision 2030 projects, including the Public Investment Fund and its subsidiaries developing the new city of Neom, have already borrowed tens of billions of dollars.

A representative for the Ministry of Finance didn't immediately respond to requests for comment outside of office hours on Friday. A representative for ICBC wasn't immediately available to comment.

IMF to urge China to shift growth model towards consumption, says Georgieva

Reuters
Washington

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) plans to tell China to boost weak domestic consumption, address its troubled real estate sector and rein in local government debt, problems that are dragging down both Chinese and global growth, IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva told Reuters.

Georgieva said in an exclusive interview the messages will be delivered to Chinese authorities in a forthcoming IMF "Article IV" review of China's economic policies.

The Fund will strongly urge Beijing to shift its growth model away from debt-fuelled infrastructure investment and real estate, she said.

"Our advice to China is use your policy space in a way that helps you shift your growth model towards more domestic consumption," Georgieva said. "Because the traditional way of infrastructure, pumping in more money, in this current environment is not going to be productive."

"China's ageing population and falling productivity were playing a "suppressing role" in its growth rate, along with companies in the US and Europe shifting supply chains away from China. China's problems in the real estate sector have also caused consumers to rein in spending, Georgieva said.

"We actually project that without structural reforms, medium term growth in China can fall below 4%," Georgieva said.

The IMF in July forecast China's 2023 growth rate at 5.2% and 4.5% in 2024, but warned it could be lower given the contraction in real estate.

Georgieva also said it was important for China to address consumer confidence in its real estate sector by financing the completion of apartments that buyers have already paid for, rather than bailing out troubled developers.

The IMF is preparing to issue a new set of global growth forecasts ahead of IMF and World Bank annual meetings October 9-15. Georgieva said separately the institutions would decide on Monday whether to proceed with the meetings in earthquake-hit Morocco.

The new forecasts are expected to reflect concerns about anaemic GDP growth around the world, as most large economies are still lagging pre-pandemic growth rates. The US is the only large economy to have recovered pre-pandemic growth, while China is four percentage points below pre-pandemic trends, Europe down two percentage points and the world down three percentage points.

Weekly Market Report

QNB FINANCIAL SERVICES

The Qatar Stock Exchange (QSE) Index moved up by 81.64 points or 0.8% during the week to close at 10,319.28. Market capitalisation went up by 0.4% to QR605.3bn compared with QR603.0bn at the end of the previous trading week. Of the 51 traded companies, 25 ended the week higher and 24 ended lower, while two were unchanged. Alkhaleej Takaful Insurance (AKHI) was the best performing stock for the week, rising 12.2%. Meanwhile, Qatar General Insurance & Reinsurance (QGRI) was the worst performing stock for the week, down 9.8%.

Masraf Al Rayan (MARK), Industries Qatar (IQCD), and Nakilat (QGTS) were the primary contributors to the weekly index gain. MARK and IQCD added 29.78 and 22.40 points to the index, respectively. Further, QGTS contributed another 21.32 points.

Traded value during the week shot up 41.0% to reach QR3,583.9mn from QR2,542.6mn in the prior trading week. Dukhan Bank (DUBK) was the top value traded stock during the week with total traded value of QR485.9mn.

Traded volume increased 24.4% to reach 1,273.3mn shares compared with 1,023.9mn shares in the prior trading week. The number of transactions went up 7.3% to 103,630 vs 96,601 in the prior week. Gulf International Services (GISS) was the top volume traded stock during the week with total traded volume of 165.5mn shares.

Foreign institutions turned bullish, ending the week with net buying of QR69.9mn vs net selling of QR62.7mn in the prior week. Qatari institutions turned bearish with net selling of QR11.5mn vs. net buying of QR68.9mn in the week before. Foreign retail investors ended the week with net buying of QR15.8mn vs net selling of QR1.2mn in the prior week. Qatari retail investors recorded net selling of QR74.3mn vs net selling of QR5.1mn the week before. YTD (as of Thursday's closing), global foreign institutions were net short $163.3mn, while GCC institutions were net buyers of Qatari stocks by $706.5mn.

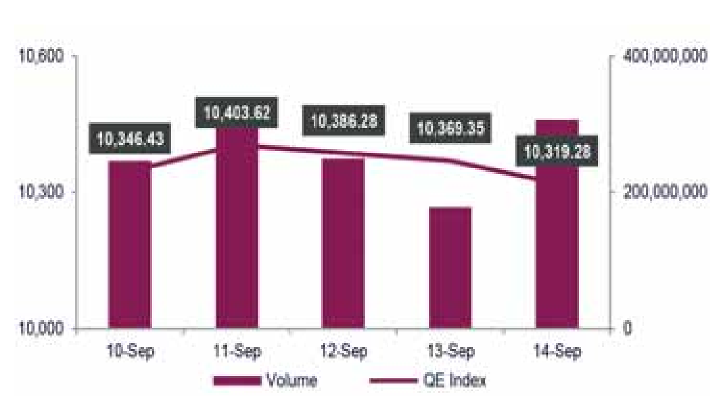
Market Indicators	Week ended. Sept 14, 2023	Week ended. Sept 07, 2023	Chg. %
Value Traded (QR mn)	3,583.9	2,542.6	41.0
Exch. Market Cap. (QR mn)	605,288.3	602,983.2	0.4
Volume (mn)	1,273.3	1,023.9	24.4
Number of Transactions	103,630	96,601	7.3
Companies Traded	51	51	0.0
Market Breadth	25:24	19:29	–

Source: Qatar Exchange (QE)

Market Indices	Close	WTD%	MTD%	YTD%
Total Return	22,146.62	0.8	1.2	1.2
ALL Share Index	3,461.47	0.8	0.7	1.3
Banks and Financial Services	4,168.21	0.8	(1.4)	(5.0)
Industrials	4,185.72	0.5	5.8	10.7
Transportation	4,573.42	4.2	4.2	5.5
Real Estate	1,498.01	(0.6)	(0.4)	(4.0)
Insurance	2,424.62	1.9	(0.1)	10.9
Telecoms	1,582.33	(2.6)	(2.6)	20.0
Consumer Goods & Services	7,597.72	0.0	(0.4)	(4.0)
Al Rayan Islamic Index	4,556.18	0.2	1.0	(0.8)

Source: Qatar Exchange (QE)

QSE Index and Volume



Source: Qatar Exchange (QE)

Weekly Index Performance

Source: Bloomberg

DISCLAIMER

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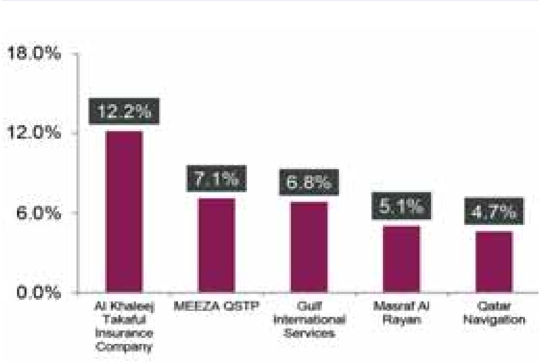
Regional Indices	Close	WTD%	MTD%	YTD%	Weekly Exchange Traded Value ($ mn)	Exchange Mkt. Cap. ($ mn)	TTM P/E**	P/B**	Dividend Yield
Qatar*	10,319.28	0.8	1.2	(3.4)	984.74	165,970.1	13.0	1.4	4.8
Dubai	4,034.00	(0.6)	(1.2)	20.9	336.67	187,030.0	9.2	1.3	4.5
Abu Dhabi	9,796.39	1.4	(0.1)	(4.1)	1,170.05	745,079.4	31.6	3.0	1.7
Saudi Arabia#	11,122.23	(0.8)	(3.2)	6.1	8,049.65	2,951,810.6	18.6	2.1	3.4
Kuwait	7,029.12	0.3	0.3	(3.6)	572.30	146,260.7	16.4	1.5	3.9
Oman	4,725.90	0.8	(1.5)	(2.7)	30.39	22,486.8	13.0	0.9	4.6
Bahrain	1,931.48	(0.5)	(1.1)	1.9	25.78	54,846.1	7.3	0.7	8.7

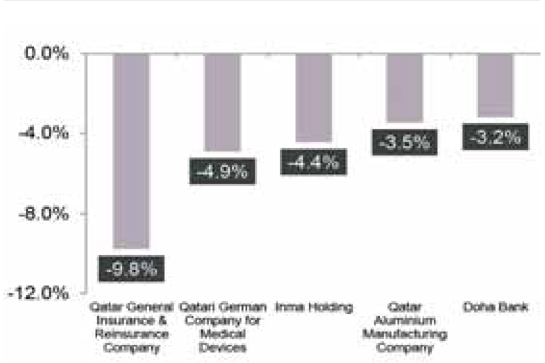
Source: Bloomberg

Qatar Stock Exchange

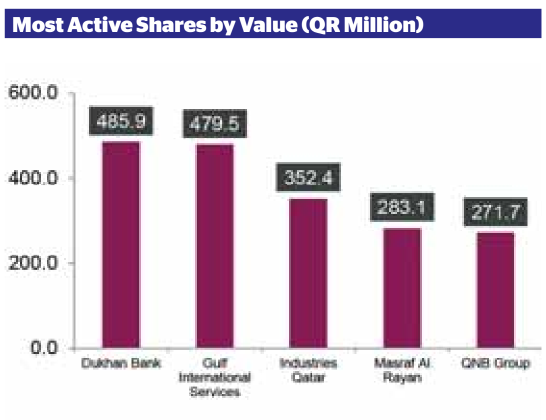
Top Five Gainers



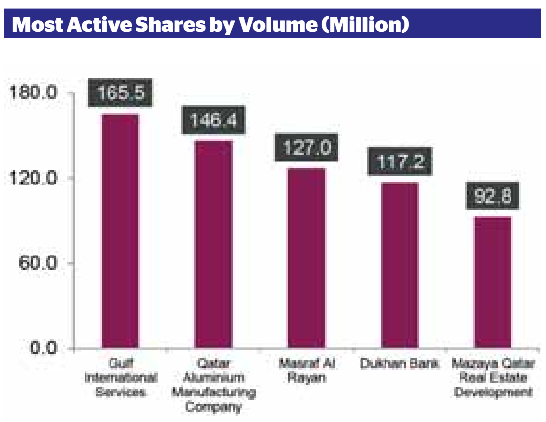
Top Five Decliners



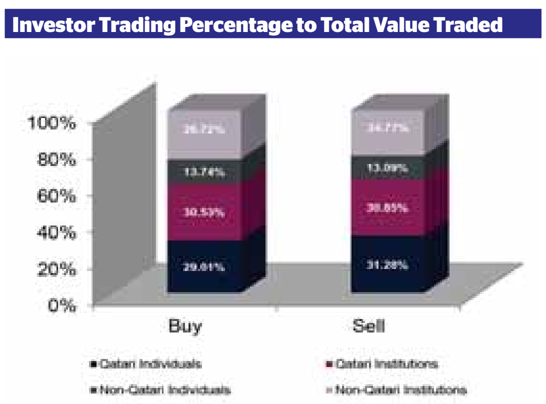
Most Active Shares by Value (QR Million)



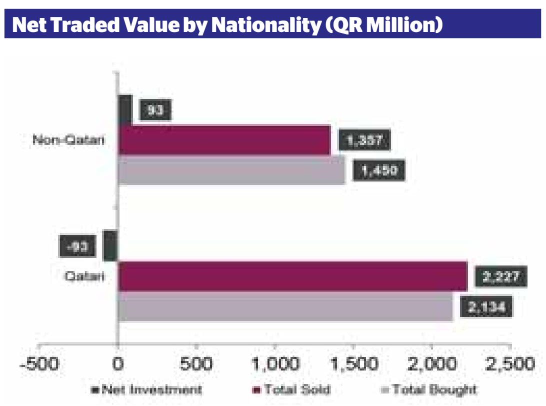
Most Active Shares by Volume (Million)



Investor Trading Percentage to Total Value Traded



Net Traded Value by Nationality (QR Million)



Company Name	Price September 14	% Change Weekly	% Change YTD	Market Cap. QR Million	TTM P/E	P/B	Div. Yield
Qatar National Bank	15.35	1.12	(14.72)	141,779	10.3	1.7	3.9
Qatar Islamic Bank	18.80	(1.31)	1.29	44,423	11.3	1.9	3.3
Commercial Bank of Qatar	5.69	1.64	13.80	23,029	8.7	1.2	4.4
Doha Bank	1.62	(3.18)	(17.31)	5,007	15.6	0.5	4.6
Al Ahli Bank	3.70	(1.33)	(7.71)	9,442	12.4	1.4	5.4
Qatar International Islamic Bank	10.00	0.79	(3.86)	15,135	14.9	2.2	4.0
Masraf Al Rayan	2.23	5.05	(29.83)	20,693	20.0	0.9	4.5
Lesha Bank	1.42	0.71	23.67	1,586	21.7	1.3	N/A
National Leasing	0.79	0.00	12.22	391	18.6	0.6	3.8
Diala Holding	1.59	(2.21)	39.58	303	N/A	1.7	N/A
Qatar & Oman Investment	0.86	2.15	55.64	270	N/A	1.1	N/A
Islamic Holding Group	4.60	(4.45)	11.80	260	43.9	1.7	1.1
Dukhan Bank	4.07	(2.95)	(6.37)	21,318	1.8	0.2	3.9
Banking and Financial Services				**283,637**			
Zad Holding	13.80	(0.72)	(0.75)	3,966	22.1	3.3	4.3
Qatar German Co. for Medical Devices	2.15	(4.92)	70.64	248	191.2	6.9	N/A
Salam International Investment	0.69	(2.41)	12.21	788	23.6	0.6	N/A
Baladna	1.31	0.00	(14.63)	2,485	32.6	1.1	N/A
Medicare Group	5.70	(2.80)	(8.17)	1,604	20.0	1.6	4.6
Qatar Cinema & Film Distribution	3.18	(0.81)	1.96	199	57.8	1.6	1.9
Qatar Fuel	16.23	0.81	(9.58)	16,137	16.1	1.9	5.5
Widam Food	2.26	(1.74)	11.22	407	N/A	2.6	N/A
Mannai Corp.	4.87	(2.29)	(35.87)	2,220	N/A	2.3	2.1
Al Meera Consumer Goods	13.82	0.14	(9.79)	2,847	14.6	1.8	3.2
Consumer Goods and Services				**30,901**			
Qatar Industrial Manufacturing	2.91	(2.64)	(9.31)	1,383	7.9	0.8	4.5
Qatar National Cement	3.60	0.45	(25.62)	2,353	10.8	0.8	8.3
Industries Qatar	13.71	1.41	7.03	82,946	15.9	2.2	8.0
Qatari Investors Group	1.72	(0.17)	1.84	2,135	12.6	0.7	8.7
Qatar Electricity and Water	17.56	(1.46)	(0.79)	19,316	10.9	1.3	5.4
Aamal	0.84	0.24	(13.44)	5,317	14.8	0.7	5.9
Gulf International Services	2.94	6.80	101.44	5,462	13.6	1.5	3.4
Mesaieed Petrochemical Holding	1.83	(2.25)	(14.06)	22,965	17.5	1.4	6.0
Estithmar Holding	2.19	2.43	21.67	7,455	21.5	1.6	N/A
Qatar Aluminum Manufacturing	1.34	(3.46)	(11.84)	7,477	13.6	1.1	6.7
Mekdam Holding Group	5.13	(0.43)	(11.00)	416	12.6	4.0	5.2
Meeza QSTP	2.68	7.08	23.41	1,738	N/A	N/A	N/A
Industrials				**157,225**			
Qatar Insurance	2.34	3.08	21.68	7,643	61.7	1.3	N/A
QLM Life & Medical Insurance	2.77	1.47	(42.38)	968	11.4	1.7	4.5
Doha Insurance	2.10	0.86	6.11	1,050	9.6	0.9	7.1
Qatar General Insurance & Reinsurance	1.15	(9.77)	(21.39)	1,010	N/A	0.2	N/A
Al Khaleej Takaful Insurance	3.34	12.16	45.11	852	14.2	1.5	3.0
Qatar Islamic Insurance	8.85	0.06	1.67	1,327	11.5	2.9	5.1
Damaan Islamic Insurance Company	3.60	2.27	(14.49)	720	N/A	1.5	4.4
Insurance				**13,569**			
United Development	1.11	(1.86)	(14.69)	3,927	9.6	0.4	5.0
Barwa Real Estate	2.63	0.38	(8.46)	10,234	8.9	0.5	6.7
Ezdan Real Estate	1.02	(1.16)	2.00	27,082	N/A	0.8	N/A
Mazaya Qatar Real Estate Development	0.75	0.67	7.76	868	23.6	0.8	N/A
Real Estate				**42,111**			
Ooredoo	10.50	(2.87)	14.13	33,634	12.5	1.3	4.1
Vodafone Qatar	1.81	(1.63)	14.20	7,651	14.0	1.6	5.5
Telecoms				**41,284**			
Qatar Navigation (Milaha)	10.00	4.66	(1.48)	11,362	11.1	0.7	3.5
Gulf Warehousing	3.24	1.16	(19.99)	190	7.9	0.8	3.1
Qatar Gas Transport (Nakilat)	3.87	3.98	5.68	21,441	14.5	1.9	3.4
Transportation				**32,992**			
Qatar Exchange				**605,288**			

Technical analysis of the QSE index

The QSE index closed slightly up for the second week in a row (0.8% from the week before); it closed at 10,319.3 points. We remain bullish in the medium term; the index bounced off the 10,000 psychological level and it created a bullish-reversal signal (based on candlestick formation). Our weekly levels of resistance are around the 11,750 level and the support at the 10,000 level.

Definitions of key terms used in technical analysis

RSI (Relative Strength Index) indicator – RSI is a momentum oscillator that measures the speed and change of price movements. The RSI oscillates between 0 to 100. The index is deemed to be overbought once the RSI approaches the 70 level, indicating that a correction is likely. On the other hand, if the RSI approaches 30, it is an indication that the index may be getting oversold and therefore likely to bounce back.

MACD (Moving Average Convergence Divergence) indicator – The indicator consists of the MACD line and a signal line. The divergence or the convergence of the MACD line with the signal line indicates the strength in the momentum during the uptrend or downtrend, as the case may be. When the MACD crosses the signal line from below and trades above it, it gives a positive indication. The reverse is the situation for a bearish trend.

Candlestick chart – A candlestick chart is a price chart that displays the high, low, open, and close for a security. The 'body' of the chart is portion between the open and close price, while the high and low intraday movements form the 'shadow'. The candlestick may represent any time frame. We use a one-day candlestick chart (every candlestick represents one trading day) in our analysis.

WEEKLY ENERGY MARKET REVIEW

Oil gains for third straight week on tight supply, China optimism

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Oil
Oil prices hit a 10-month high on Friday and posted a third weekly gain as supply tightness spearheaded by Saudi Arabian production cuts combined with optimism around Chinese demand to lift crude. Brent crude futures rose 23 cents, or 0.3%, to settle at $93.93 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate futures was up 61 cents, or 0.7%, to close at $90.77 a barrel.
Both contracts traded at 10-month highs on Tuesday for the fifth consecutive session, and gained about 4% on a weekly basis. Supply concerns continue to be a driving force for prices since Saudi Arabia and Russia this month announced an extension of their combined supply cuts of 1.3mn barrels per day to the end of this year, analysts said. Better-than-expected industrial output and retail sales data in China also boosted oil prices last week, with the country's economic conditions considered crucial to oil demand for the rest of this year. Data on Friday showed Chinese oil refinery processing rose by nearly 20% from a year earlier as processors kept run rates high to capitalise on high global demand for oil products.
In addition, expectations of moderating US oil output have also boosted prices in recent weeks.

Oil rigs are seen at Vaca Muerta shale oil and gas drilling, in the Patagonian province of Neuquen, Argentina. Oil prices hit a 10-month high on Friday and posted a third weekly gain as supply tightness spearheaded by Saudi Arabian production cuts combined with optimism around Chinese demand to lift crude. *Picture supplied by the Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah International Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development.*

Gas
Asian spot liquefied natural gas (LNG) prices inched up last week amid supply concerns as workers at Chevron's Australia LNG projects escalated industrial action and as feedgas intake at US Freeport dropped below normal capacity.
The average LNG price for October delivery into north-east Asia rose to $13.00 per million British thermal units (mmBtu) from $12.90 in the previous week, industry sources estimated. Workers at Chevron's Gorgon and Wheatstone in Australia, responsible for more than 5% of global supply, on Thursday escalated what had been six days limited strikes.
Until around the end of September, unions can strike for up to 24 hours a day and refuse tasks such as loading tankers. Elsewhere, Freeport LNG has cancelled four cargoes since its feedgas intake dropped. In Europe, the disruption at Freeport and Norway's maintenance extensions, have resulted in a generally strong week for gas prices at the Dutch TTF hub. For the week, TTF rose by 6% to $11.46 per mmBtu. In the US, gas futures slid about 2% on Friday on lower production reductions than previously expected and forecasts for less warm weather. For the week, prices were up about 1.5% after falling 6% last week.

■ *This article was supplied by the Abdullah Bin Hamad Al-Attiyah International Foundation for Energy and Sustainable Development.*

Qatar's GDP forecast at $222bn this year, $282bn in 2027: FocusEconomics

By Pratap John
Business Editor

Qatar's GDP has been forecast at $222bn this year and $282bn in 2027, FocusEconomics said in its latest country update. Consequently, GDP per capita is projected to rise to $112,295 in 2027 from $84,720 this year.
In its forecast, FocusEconomics said the country's GDP will scale up to $228bn next year, $246bn (2025), $263bn (2026) and $282bn (2027).
GDP per capita will rise to $88,009 in 2024, $95,974 (2025), $103,537 (2026) and $112,295.
Qatar's GDP growth has been forecast at 2.4% this year and in 2024 and 4.9% (2025), 4.4% (2026) and 4.3% (2027).
Fiscal balance (as a percentage of the country's GDP) has been projected at 6% this year, 5.6% (2024), 5.2% (2025), 6.3% (2026) and 7.1% (2027).
Public debt (as a percentage of the country's GDP) will gradually fall over the next four years- from 46% this year to 38.9% in 2027. Next year, it has been forecast at 44.4%, 44.5% (2025) and 42% (2026).
Current account balance (as a percentage of the country's GDP) has been forecast at 16.8% this year, 14.8% (2024), 15.6% (2025), 13.6% (2026) and 13.3% (2027).
In dollar terms, current account balance has been forecast at $37.2bn this year, $33.9bn (2024), $38.3bn (2025), $35.8bn (2026) and $37.6bn (2027).
Merchandise trade balance (in dollar terms) has been forecast at $70.8bn this year, $68.7bn (2024), $69.9bn (2025), $73.1bn (2026) and 80.6bn (2027).
Unemployment (among active population) will remain at a meagre 0.2% from this year to 2027, FocusEconomics said.
The country's economic growth ebbed to 2.7% year on year in the first quarter according to recent data, the researcher noted. The energy sector drove the expansion, while the non-oil sector slowed sharply from Q4 as the World Cup which took place in the country ended in December last year.
Turning to Q2 (2023), monthly industrial production data through May suggests that growth in the energy sector slowed.
In contrast, PMI readings through June point to an acceleration in non-oil private sector activity.
In particular, firms in the hospitality industry likely benefited from the more than doubling of visitor arrivals in annual terms.
In July Qatar inked a ten-year deal to provide condensate to a state-owned UAE firm. This is the latest in a string of long-term energy supply agreements reached over the last year, and is a sign of warming relations between Qatar and the Gulf Co-operation Council, after the latter lifted its blockade in 2021.
GDP growth is forecast to roughly halve this year from last on a "weaker" construction sector, higher interest rates and a tough base of comparison given the economy was boosted by the World Cup in 2022.
"However, improved relations with Arab neighbours, surging visitor arrivals and ongoing energy sector investment—both in fossil fuels and renewables— will provide support," FocusEconomics noted.
The country's inflation fell to 3.1% in July from 3.2% in June, the researcher noted.
Qatar Central Bank hiked rates from 6% to 6.25% in late July, following the Federal Reserve's same-sized hike.
FocusEconomics panellists see inflation moderating on average this year from last on tighter monetary policy, the end of the World Cup-related demand surge and lower commodity prices.
They see consumer prices rising 2.9% on average in 2023, which is unchanged from one month ago, and rising 2.3% on average in 2024.

Vodafone Qatar acquires ISO re-certification for quality management

Vodafone Qatar has announced that it has earned the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO 9001:2015) re-certification for quality management for its HR Department.
This prestigious recognition epitomises the mobile operator's exceptional compliance with the highest quality standards across all aspects of its HR function in order to deliver an optimum work environment for its employees.
To secure the re-certification, Vodafone Qatar partnered with the leading business improvement and standards company, BSI (British Standards Institution) that conducted a comprehensive and rigorous audit of the company's procedures and policies against the international standard. The standard is built upon several quality management indicators, such as employee performance, training and development, customer service, and ongoing quality improvement.
After a series of meticulous department-wide evaluations, BSI determined that the procedures and practices deployed at Vodafone Qatar were consistent with the quality assurance requirements laid out by ISO 9001:2015.
Khames Mohamed al-Naimi, chief human resources officer at Vodafone Qatar, said: "The ISO 9001:2015 re-certification (for HR Function) is testament to Vodafone Qatar's unyielding resolve and consistent endeavour to uphold high-performance and quality culture and service excellence across the organisation.
"We are immensely proud of every member of our team for their contributions in helping us achieve this significant milestone and for continually raising the bar in adherence and performance, whilst keeping organisational goals and efficiency at the top of their priorities."
Jamal Dalli, business development manager META at BSI said: "BSI would like to congratulate Vodafone on its recertification to ISO 9001, which helps to show Vodafone's commitment to improvement as well as to quality products and services. This validates Vodafone's proactive approach to demonstrating quality, which can bring long-term, positive benefits to employees, customers and society."
The accomplishment reaffirms Vodafone Qatar's superiority as one of the leading organisations in the country to obtain the ISO certification. This marks the second time in a row that the company has attained the certification after the first award in 2020.
These certifications are complemented by additional recognitions acquired by the company, including the ISO 22301:2012 and ISO 22301:2019 for its Business Continuity Management System in 2019 and 2022, respectively. To find out more about Vodafone Qatar, visit www.vodafone.qa

The recognition epitomises Vodafone Qatar's exceptional compliance with the highest quality standards across all aspects of its HR function to deliver an optimum work environment for its employees

Signs provided by US yield curve inversion should not be ignored: QNB

Signs provided by the yield curve inversion should not be ignored, QNB said and noted there are currently enough imbalances in the US economy to prevent a "soft landing" and eventually bring a recession in H2, 2024.
US economic growth has surprised to the upside in recent quarters, supporting global demand through a period of weakness associated with a "manufacturing recession," policy tightening and increased geopolitical uncertainty, QNB said in an economic commentary.
This can be observed by the US Citi Economic Surprise Index, which summarises how relevant economic data releases have beaten or missed analyst expectations over a period of time. Positive surprises have been dominating negative surprises since late 2022.
In fact, it is not a daunting task to find macroeconomic and financial indicators supporting a bullish US growth story at this moment, QNB said.
Equity prices rebounded strongly and are close to all-time highs, GDP is currently growing above potential, and unemployment is hovering around multi-decade lows.
However, one should take a more nuanced approach when looking into the data, as certain indicators tend to trigger warning signs much in advance of any material problem.
Importantly, macro-sensitive US Treasuries are pointing to a more complex backdrop. Different metrics from the US government yield curve, which is the yield differential between similar instruments with different maturities, have inverted.
For example, the benchmark spread between 10-year Treasury notes and Fed fund rates turned negative in December 2022, before diving further into deep negative territory in recent months.
This benchmark spread is a leading indicator of recessions as lower long yields imply lower growth expectations and higher short yields imply monetary tightening.
This sign has flashed in advance of the last seven US recessions since the early 1960s, usually giving a year or two of warning before a recession starts. Is this time different when it comes to the accuracy of the yield curve signal? Can the US indeed avoid a deeper recession over the next 18 months?
As US growth steadies and inflation moderates, investors and market analysts seem to be converging towards an optimistic position, implying that the US can indeed avoid a recession. This is due to the belief that US authorities are operating a "beautiful tightening," where the Federal Reserve (Fed) calibrates policy to deliver an optimal "soft landing," i.e., a policy mix that moderates growth just enough to push inflation back to the 2% target without causing any major stress in demand.
In QNB's view, however, this position is too optimistic.
Historically, the Fed was never able to contain runaway inflation with a "soft landing."
During previous tightening cycles, either policy action was not strong enough, leading to a disruptive pickup in inflation, or policy quickly became too tight, forcing a more pronounced economic downturn.
Uncertain long lags between policy measures and their impact in activity tend to make the prospect of policy calibration rather illusory. "Policy mistakes," interpreted either as an over- or under- reaction to inflation, are the historical norm.
Currently, given the underlying strength of the US economy and the financial health of US households, we expect to see the US economy accelerating over the next few months.
According to the Atlanta Fed's GDPNow model, which estimates real time growth with high frequency data, US growth is running at 4.1% in Q3, 2023, more than double most estimates of trend growth.
Building permits increased, capital expenditure intentions are rising and the forward-looking Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) new orders-to-inventory ratio are implying a turning point to the manufacturing cycle back into expansion mode over the next few months.
Importantly, labour force participation among prime-age workers surpassed pre-pandemic levels.
Hence, unless labour demand slows, real wages will rise, as there is very little room for a further increase in labour supply. Similarly, capacity utilisation is running hot, more than 2.5% above its long-term average, suggesting very limited supply side space to accommodate higher demand.
While these factors point to a robust US economy, it is not necessarily good news, QNB noted.
"Strong US activity, combined with tight labour markets and low spare capacity, is likely to lead to another wave of high inflation. This should compel the Fed to enact more rate hikes and risk bringing a sharper downturn later in 2024," QNB added.